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Washington, July 10 — The flareup in the Senate today over token U.S. military assistance to the rebellion-threatened Congolese government scarcely seemed warranted considering the small size of the force involved.

Planes to Congo Stir Up Critics Of Global Cop

So what if President Johnson had suddenly decided that a gesture was required, and rushed three big military transports and 40 or 50 paratroopers to the Congo, just to show our moral support?

Yet the chief Senate critics of this action were very alarmed about it. What was really bothering them? Was it really fear that from such a small commitment in Africa could well grow a larger commitment, following the Vietnam pattern?

What actually was involved in this bitter blasting at the Administration's action constituted a challenge to Johnson-Rusk-McNamara foreign policy in general.

This was made clear by the composition of the bloc of critics. The chief ones were big-name Senate Democrats. Seeing eye to eye on the over-all issue were Chairman Richard B. Russell of the Armed Services Committee, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, Chairman J. William Fulbright of the Foreign Relations Committee and Chairman John Stennis of the preparedness subcommittee.

What do these four have in common? They are split on Vietnam war policy. On that issue, Mansfield and Fulbright are soft — for negotiation at almost any cost. Stennis and Russell want victory in a hurry, favor increased military pressure on land and in the air.

But all four think alike on one aspect of cold war global military policy. They think we are over-extended, and are violently opposed to the idea that the United States should be a global policeman.

Until today they had reason to believe that the Administration opposed the peace-policeman role for the U.S. Secretary of State Rusk had consistently derided the "Pax Americana" idea.

Rusk and McNamara have insisted that by simply standing up to Communist aggression in Vietnam the chances were diminished of aggression elsewhere, so our military anti-aggression commitments to 40 other nations did not require an increase in our "police force."

At least this was the Administration's answer to Russell and Stennis when they warned that our defense posture globally required expansion if we were to meet our commitments in other parts of the world than Vietnam.

The cautious way the Johnson-Rusk-McNamara team avoided any provocative military action with this "anti-policeman" policy.



Sen. John Stennis
A critic of foreign policy

What Angered Senate's Big Four

These background reasons should be sufficient to explain the angry tone of today's Senate criticism. It was as if the four Senators had suddenly realized that the Administration, despite all pledges otherwise, was determined to act the role of world cop beginning in the Congo.

Russell considered it "immoral" to send even one American into a country where we have no commitment and no vital interest whatsoever. Mansfield said he was "shocked and dismayed" at the dispatch of the military mission. Stennis said the U.S. lacks the manpower to get "involved on the other side of the world" while we are tied down in Vietnam.

These three, plus Fulbright, also were sore because Congress had not been consulted.

Russell touched on another issue. That concerned the right to make a military gesture of any kind in "a purely internal matter." This is a most delicate aspect of U.S. foreign policy.

The Georgia Senator noted that "tribal wars" are prevalent in most of Africa. He asked whether, in view of the Congo action, we should make a similar military gesture in Nigeria's civil war.

He might have added that South American countries could well be disturbed over our Congo maneuver, wondering if it presaged military intervention in any south-of-the-border revolutionary development.

CIA's Role Is Yet to Be Explained

Still to be explained is the role of the Central Intelligence Agency in the Congo crisis. The record of the spy agency in the Congo suggests that it still is operating in that African country in an important, if clandestine, way.

In 1963, for example, it turned out that the CIA had recruited Cuban fliers—anti-Castro exiles with nothing much to do after the Bay of Pigs fiasco—for anti-Tshombe service in the Congo. It also developed at that time that a CIA agent, Frank Bender, who had been a big shot in the training of Cuban exiles in Guatemala, had been transferred for an important secret mission in the Congo.

It is doubtful that either the President or his chief global advisers anticipated today's Senate reaction to dispatch of the three military transports to the Congo. The policy controversy provoked by the Administration's move is more likely to spread than be contained. It could even figure significantly in the President's effort to sell the Senate on increased Vietnam war costs—an effort almost certainly to follow McNamara's return from Saigon with figures on new military manpower needs.